

GEORGIA YOUTH HOUSES AND YOUTH CLUBS FINAL EVALUATION

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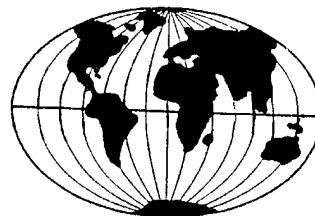
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this evaluation is to look at the performance of the Youth Programs implemented by AED and UMCOR, whether or not they accomplished the terms and objectives of their scope of work, and what they contributed to the Mission's Strategic Objective: SO 3.1 Reduced Suffering in Target Communities. The Team was to determine the status of the programs currently, their successes and weaknesses, and their sustainability as organizations. The Team was also to provide recommendations for the follow-on activity.

B. METHODOLOGY

The Evaluation Team examined quarterly and final reports and other relevant materials included in the attached Bibliography. The Team also made site visits in Zugdidi, Tbilisi, Tskaltubo, Kutaisi, and Batumi where it met with beneficiaries of the programs. Discussions were held with representatives of implementing partners in Washington, DC, New York City and in the Republic of Georgia. Because of travel restrictions, the Team could not travel to Abkhazia.

C. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Team found that in design, implementation and achievements, UMCOR, through the Houses in Zugdidi and in Tbilisi have indeed fulfilled their mission to foster community development and dialogue in the aftermath of the conflict in Abkhazia through the psychological, social and educational development of youth affected on both sides of the conflict; and to provide vulnerable youth with sustainable opportunities for personal growth and psychosocial rehabilitation.

There is no question that each of the Youth Clubs have selected and worked with natural leaders. Where these young people have found resources they have used them to the fullest. They are enthusiastic, articulate, hard working and smart. The Clubs that were working together with the Youth Houses were the most confident of succeeding and, while still feeling the need to do more, pleased with what they had been able to achieve.

The UMCOR and AED programs have served vulnerable youth well and one could only wish that there had been more resources to meet the demand. The Team enjoyed the atmosphere in both Houses and their time with the Clubs. We found busy children and teenagers, as well as adult groups. Even when the power failed, the discussion and the work went on. If anything, our recommendation would be that the models be continued and expanded to include more of the youth in Georgia that is so in need of educational opportunities outside of school, and possibilities for creative self-expression.

2. CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

The Youth Houses are both invaluable resources for the youth whom they serve, and the community support they have engendered represents their value to that community. It is not yet possible however, for the Youth Houses to provide a bridge to a job market that is so little formed as an actual “market” functioning according to what is understood as supply and demand for developed nations. The Youth Houses fill an important gap in the educational, recreational and creative needs of Georgian and Abkhaz youth, but even the Youth Houses are not up to solving some of Georgia’s endemic problems such a deteriorating educational system and a job market that is still not a “real market.”

Unfortunately, each Youth Club is also a victim of its local employment environment and the larger problems in Georgia itself. The Clubs are not in a position to create employment, except through AED itself. While it fills an important gap in their lives for the children involved, the program cannot hope to provide either the financial support needed for these children to have access to the educational system, nor can it solve Georgia’s critical unemployment problem.

While other programs need to generate jobs, in agriculture, in service and communications, the Youth Houses and Clubs need to be brought into the loop about such efforts. It is recommended that a Youth Employment Service be set up for local job markets that can feed into a larger system. The Youth Houses would make good partners for such a program, which is described in the body of the Evaluation.

3. SUSTAINABILITY

While a great deal of credit should go to UMCOR for putting so much effort into training these organizations, and supporting their transition to independent NGOs, it should also be noted that the Zugdidi Youth House was founded on the base of an already existing NGO, which was ready for the next stage of organizational growth. NGOs have life cycles like any other organization, and to some degree, Atinati and UMCOR appear to have found each other at the right time. It is to be hoped the others will survive, but that remains to be seen.

The Clubs have the will to be sustainable, but at the moment, not the capacity to carry out their wishes, except in the case where they are working jointly with other organizations. Both Youth Houses, and most likely the others in Abkhazia as well, will need continued mentoring and some support over the next few years. They give an important service to their communities, but local governments are nowhere near being able to support these NGOs financially, and the community they serve is largely unemployed and poor.

4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

It is clear that while the Youth Houses are working to continue their mission, their future is being strengthened by the presence in both the Zugdidi and the Tbilisi Youth Houses, of the AED Youth Clubs. The synergy is good in both. The work with IDPs and vulnerable local youth continues for both the House staff and for the AED Club group, which has helped integrate the two slightly different missions into one: to serve the community’s vulnerable young people, whether they are Georgian or IDPs. Both the Clubs and the Houses together have been able to

get the attention of other organizations that have come to them with projects to implement. Hopefully, this capacity can be turned into financial sustainability in the long run.

One of the lessons learned in this evaluation is that it takes time, a minimum of five years usually, to grow a sustainable NGO. Donors who create NGOs to serve a purpose usually end up with a dependent organization. While this is a legitimate way to respond to immediate needs in the event of a crisis, there is no reason to require that the artificially created NGO be sustainable. Sustainability can only be brought about in an institution responding to grassroots needs, and that in itself is a difficult developmental task requiring patience, a great deal of training and a long-term commitment.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Evaluation Team approves of the Mission's idea to not just set up new Youth Clubs in other regions, but also to include ethnic Georgian youth and to establish connections between these young people and their peers who are Ossetian, Armenian and Azeri, and Adjarian.
2. We agree with the Mission that youth club coordinators and representative members should be more involved in planning sessions for joint activities than they have been in the past. This is also an opportunity to involve other NGOs that are working with youth, including student unions and women's organizations, whose members might also benefit from and contribute to local programs.
3. While a merger of the Youth Houses and Clubs may not be the only way to accomplish more and stronger organizations, a great deal of investment has already taken place in both, so it would seem an economical strategy to merge both where it is possible, and where they are both willing to work together. We also suggest that a permanent "house" in Kutaisi is much needed, with the understanding that this will support Youth Clubs both there and in Tskaltubo. In other cases where a "house" is not feasible, simply supporting some meeting place or office, and basic equipment may be enough for the new Clubs.
4. The Team also agrees that all children need to be exposed to civic education programs. While some may get the information through the targeted school program, others who are not in a financial position to continue school should also have the opportunity to join in these classes outside school. However it is done, through the Clubs, or the Youth Houses, it is an important course for all.
5. The programs supporting student government and civic education in schools have formed a core of activist students on whom many of the NGO leaders depend to implement the organizations' activities. These students are either working for or managing NGOs that are reaching out to the most needy in their communities. There are not nearly enough of these young people to meet the overwhelming need. Continued training at this juncture is essential to expand the outreach of all ongoing programs. We would like to suggest a few areas where these young people can help in furthering other USAID programs.
 - a. There is an excellent core of trainers that could be given TOT in all the needed subjects. Training in NGO management, the recruitment of volunteers,

developing a broader based membership, and fundraising are all topics that would permit these organizations to better manage themselves before they are able to be either organizationally or financially sustainable. While it is understood that this training is taking place presently, those involved in doing so, need to expand their efforts, perhaps by creating a core of full-time trainers that can move around the country in the regional cities. Other NGOs can also supply material that has already been prepared in Russian and in Georgian. While most of the Club members continue to work with the IDPs and other vulnerable children, individuals in each Club could be selected to receive intensive NGO training and be put in charge of fundraising, writing proposals and contacting possible partners. They will need assistance in contacting foreign donors who will be better able to support their needs than the Georgian government, either Central or municipal.

- b. The Youth Houses and Clubs have journalism and film groups that could be enlisted to contribute more on subjects such as “living together,” films of joint activities, and local cultural studies targeted to older students. The same groups could produce films about their communities, perhaps working with some of the small infrastructure projects to show what is being done around the country.
 - c. Almost all youth mentioned that a summer camp experience had solidified training and friendships with many different social groups and nationalities. Charitable groups from the US and Europe should be encouraged to fund these and support them with volunteers when possible as UMCOR and the YMCA have done in the past. Youth Club members can be trained to write proposals to these organizations for their summer activities.
 - d. In the process of interviewing groups of trainers and “graduates” of the AED Youth Clubs, we asked them what they thought the most important issues were in their lives. All of them said that conflict mediation was at the top of their list, and some of them wanted to make this a career. Of next importance for them were trafficking, human rights and HIV/AIDS. Hiring these “graduates” as trainers for crosscutting programs for HIV/AIDS, trafficking and conflict mediation could exponentially spread information to more people. Furthermore, using “graduates” of the previous youth programs instead of teachers in the new follow-on activity may be another alternative worth considering.
- 6. It should be noted that ‘Atenati’ in Zugdid is already starting to work on a project to find friends and family members who were separated by conflict. They intend to use the Internet and have made good use of their radio station as well. Some of the successful groups like the Youth House there and in Tbilisi, need to be given credit for their success by having them share their experience at the yearly gatherings.
 - 7. Trying to institute vocational training will also be an uphill battle, as the stigma of vocational schools are only for “those who have failed regular school.” Vocational education certainly needs support, but future implementers should be aware that it would be a difficult campaign. The study suggested in both the Youth Assessment and in this Evaluation seems timely.

8. Finally, the Team would like to note that the indicators chosen for the new activity are all numerical — number of clubs, number of direct beneficiaries, etc. with the exception is the last one; change in attitudes, as measured by surveys of participants. We wish to caution the Mission that the numerical indicators will not provide information on the program's actual impact. The indicators are only able to tell you "how many" and nothing about the quality of the intervention. The Mission may also wish to clarify with the implementer exactly what attitudinal changes are to take place. The Team found no mention of these.

E. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Team would like to thank the USAID Mission for the opportunity to visit so many wonderful people doing so much good work. We enjoyed our visits with the youth and with all those working together to support them. The willingness of all we met to give joyfully to others was both a humbling and inspiring experience. We can only wish that all their wishes for the future come true.

ACRONYMS

AED	Academy for Educational Development
APD	Association for Peace and Democracy
EC	European Commission
HIV/AIDs	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
IREX	International Research and Exchange Board
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OYH	Ochamchira Youth House
SO	USAID Strategic Objective
SYH	Sukhumi Youth House
TOT	Training of trainers
TYH	Tbilisi Youth House
UMCOR	United Methodist Committee on Relief
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YLPD	Young Leaders for Peace and Development
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
ZYH	Zugdidi Youth House

GEORGIA YOUTH HOUSES AND YOUTH CLUBS

FINAL EVALUATION

I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

1. *Political Situation*

Georgia has been through a series of changes since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in the 1990s, all of which have affected its youth (this evaluation includes the group from 15 to 24 years old). Struggles to develop a market economy and democratic governance have both helped and frustrated Georgian youth. The quality of education and equal access to it, as well as its relevance to skills in demand on the job market are problematic. Tensions between social and ethnic groups further cloud youth's expectations of a positive future; while living conditions, most notably in the health and energy sectors make the present all the more difficult, and result in a young population at risk. Some of the pressure on youth is temporarily mitigated by migration to the cities from the countryside, or emigration abroad.

2. *The Economy*

At the same time, the infrastructure needed for investment, especially in the power sector, which is, at best, functioning poorly, is not forthcoming. Corruption and familial relationships remain "the way to get things done" in both business and government.

Territorial tensions are just one more deterrent to foreign investment. While Adjara has rejoined the fold at the time of this evaluation, tensions with Abkhazia and "so called" South Ossetia continue to grow, while the displaced persons from those regions remain in less than standard living conditions and strain already over burdened social services. Especially the health and education sectors continue to suffer a general decline. In 2002 it was estimated that at least 61% of all Georgians lived below the poverty line.

3. *Situation of Children and Youth*

As a USAID/Caucasus March 2003 Evaluation on Primary and Secondary Education in Georgia states, "Schools remain probably the most important agent for change for modifying values and attitudes, often characterized in Georgia as a potent mixture of entitlement, resignation and rent-seeking." It also recognizes that "nearly all the nation's problems are reflected in the demands placed upon the nation's schools."

While reform may have decentralized the financing of education, all other functions remain with the Central Government Ministry. There is little evidence that reform has done anything to stave off the deterioration of either school buildings, or what is going on inside them. Changes have come about mostly due to donor assistance, and that is thinly spread around the country. Access to secondary education for students from an increasing number of poor families adds to the growing number of "street children." Students that continue to secondary education and

university are not being prepared for a job market, and have little motivation to study hard with few employment possibilities in their future. Whether youth are in school, or have left, financial problems are important to them, particularly because without money, access to education, to jobs, to medicine, and to entertainment is not possible. If getting an education is expensive, so are extra-curricular and out of school pastimes. During our Youth Assessment, the Team found that, for many, financial insecurity also made them feel socially inferior. Getting an education comes close to being a moral responsibility for many children. Without a diploma, many of them said, they were nothing. Also important, was that there was practically no discussion of vocations that did not require an education. Only in Kutaisi did one young man mention the need for workers, and that everyone could not sit in an office. Going to a technical or vocational school, we were told, implies you have failed.

If this is the situation for students from over 60% of Georgian families classified as living below the poverty level, it is that much worse for the IDPs who live in hotels and shelters wherever there has been room found for them. It is for these children, traumatized by conflict, and for the most vulnerable of Georgian children that the UMCOR and AED projects were intended.

II. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

A. THE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of this evaluation is to look at the performance of the Youth Programs implemented by AED and UMCOR, whether or not they accomplished the terms and objectives of their scope of work, and what they contributed to the Mission's Strategic Objective: SO 3.1 Reduced Suffering in Target Communities. The Team is to determine the status of the programs currently, their successes and weaknesses, and their sustainability as organizations. The Team is also to provide recommendations for the follow-on activity.

B. RESEARCH

Quarterly Reports; Final Reports; and other relevant materials are included in the attached Bibliography; the evaluation team also made site visits in Zugdidi, Tbilisi, Tskaltubo, Kutaisi, and Batumi where it also met with beneficiaries of the programs; and discussions were held with representatives of implementing partners in Washington, DC, New York City and in the Republic of Georgia.

Because of the elections taking place in Abkhazia, and security issues at the time of this evaluation, we were unable to visit project sites in Abkhazia.

See the list of contacts attached to the report.

III. UMCOR YOUTH HOUSES

A. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND INTERVENTIONS

The project goals were:

- ▶ To foster community development and dialogue in the aftermath of the conflict in Abkhazia through the psychological, social and educational development of youth affected on both sides of the conflict;
- ▶ To provide vulnerable youth with sustainable opportunities for personal growth and psychosocial rehabilitation through sub-grants to qualified, local NGOs; and
- ▶ To finalize the ‘professionalization’ and self-sustainability of four local NGOs managing UMCOR Youth Houses, as well as cooperation between them, and to complete development of NGO structures of Youth Houses and stimulate grassroots citizen involvement.

Although UMCOR had been working in Georgia since 1993, the project under evaluation opened its Youth Houses in Sukhumi and in Tbilisi in the beginning of 1998. The objectives of the Tbilisi House (TYH) were to provide a safe and life-enhancing environment for socially unprotected and disadvantaged young people and to help children better relate to the world around them by promoting self-reliance, and physical and mental well-being. The Sukhumi House (SYH) added support for children traumatized by war to the above objectives, and the provision of conflict resolution training.

The Zugdidi Youth House (ZYH) began in September of 1999, operated by a sub-grant to the previously established NGO “Atenati.” “Beam of Hope” registered as an NGO in 2000, became the sub-grantee to UMCOR in 2001, establishing the Ochamchira Youth House (YH). The objectives for ZYH were like those of the SYH, as Zugdidi’s population is about 50% IDPs. The city also has many socially vulnerable youth, all of whom were to be included in the educational programs. The OYH’s objectives were to improve the emotional health of children through education, to develop their creative potential, and to support them in building a democratic society.

B. PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The first year for TYH and SYH was filled with start-up problems; dealing with facilities and staff recruitment. However, both were able to initiate a few activities for youth in Tbilisi, and as many as 10 in Sukhumi. The teaching material and model had already been tested by UMCOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina after the conflict there. As time went on, teaching material was adapted to local conditions, while local needs and desires drove some of the choices for course material, such as teaching the Abkhaz language in Sukhumi. Increased funding in year 3 and 4 of the project permitted the houses to offer an expanded choice of activities.

Each Youth House, whenever it began operations, offered education, recreation, psychological assistance, and conflict resolution and transformation. The subject offerings for out of school activities always included English and computer, in which a majority of students wanted to

participate. Journalism, art and other languages, especially Spanish were next in demand. Other popular choices were drama, dance, guitar, youth clubs of many varieties and TV/video classes. These subjects were given in cycles. Students responded to what they felt would better their future situation in the job market — computer and English — and to the lack of any other opportunities out side of school for creative expression.

ZYH was virtually destroyed by a fire on the premises in December of 1999, but the staff managed to continue its work in a variety of locations while renovation was done. OYH, once it was opened in 2001, always had a problem with cramped quarters in which to operate, and access to the site by Project Management based in Tbilisi.

By the end of year one for the project, the Youth Houses stepped up the amount of training for its staff, which continued through the life of the project. In fact, staff training was frequent, with topics such as: “Peace Begins with Me,” “Children against Violence” and the TOT workshops for Youth Leadership Skills Development in Conflict Prevention, part of the on-going cooperation between AED and UMCOR.

At the time training in NGO management began for the Youth Houses, travel between Abkhazia and Georgia remained difficult, so Sukhumi began its training late. However, Sukhumi and Zugdidi established e-mail connections and exchanged letters, and videocassettes of their activities. When possible, summer camps brought participants from both sides together in other countries, so communication by 2000 during school months was between friends as well as between houses.

What the TYH and SYH called “Career Counseling” was in actuality the use of aptitude tests and therapy. Zugdidi, however, held career events and invited people of various professions to speak to the young people about their different professions. By 2000, all the Youth Houses had begun to counsel the parents of some of their students, and while the numbers were never large, the Quarterly Reports detail those numbers and the progress made in working with families. The Houses also began to reach out more often to their surrounding communities. By 2001, AED offered small grants for community development projects for which TYH and ZYH applied.

Staff training continued and sustainability plans and budgets were due to be turned in by the Houses in May of 2000. The date was moved back, as even planning for sustainability was a tough concept in very difficult economic environments. It seemed though, that at the time of a Mid-Term Project Evaluation by Susan Christiansen in September of 2000, that the concept of long-term program and management sustainability had begun to be understood by some of the staff. Preparation of materials for the future NGOs was a lengthy process and included personnel handbooks and a number of trainers’ manuals.

Throughout 2000 and 2001, staff training in NGO management topics continued, as well as work with War Child, and the Peace Building Conference in Russia that continued to offer staff new methods of working with youth in post-conflict situations.

In the meantime, the AED sponsored Youth Clubs were welcome to meet in the Youth Houses, and grants supported their activities wherever possible within the Youth House environment. ZYH was home to three YLPD Clubs. At the same time, the Youth House Directors were

negotiating to have Youth Media Projects in the Houses in Tbilisi and Zugdidi. Sukhumi applied later.

By 2001 the staff was still receiving training in NGO management, proposal writing, project design, accounting, media relations and fund raising from a wide variety of providers: Horizonti, Partners, Counterpart, and in-house trainers as well. Boards were gradually developed for TYH and for SYH. ZYH had had a governing structure even before it became a Youth House, which is perhaps why it began income producing activities and reaching out for partners early on.

In August of 2001, a project extension agreement (number 6 of 8) was signed. OYH was opened in September of that year, and the seventh extension was agreed to with USAID in March of 2002 in order to continue UMCOR's efforts to help the Houses become sustainable. UMCOR's internal evaluation at the time suggested that: 1) There was an "insufficient self sustainability level of the Youth House NGOs; and 2) inadequate theoretical knowledge and practical skills in the field of effective creative 'resourcing' among their managerial staff and youth leaders. Thus, the eighth and final extension was signed in June of 2003. Between 2002 and 2003, more NGO training was provided for the staff in proposal writing, media relations, NGO resource development and fundraising. Staff also continued to have opportunities for more training in conflict transformation, dialogue methodology, youth mediation, gender and peace, and more.

The UMCOR project finished its USAID funding in December of 2003, having served 54, 894 internally displaced and locally vulnerable children and youth, most of them from 10 to 17 years of age (about 3% of the total population in this age range.) In October of 2004, the Evaluation Team was called in to look at the Youth Houses, as they are now, what they have achieved, their strengths and weaknesses, and what are their future prospects.

The Evaluation Team was only able to visit the Centers in Zugdidi and Tbilisi, so the following section relates only to these two Houses. We interviewed the directors and some of the staff of both houses, as well as arriving at a time when classes and training was going on. It is unfortunate that due to security issues, the Team could not visit Abkhazia.

C. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

1. Findings

Critical Interventions

UMCOR staff felt that the intervention that was the most critical to their program success was the work they did to gain the children's trust in an environment where friendship was offered. They also said that the openness of all the activities and the holistic nature of the program itself were responsible for their having achieved the objectives and the end results. The staff of both Houses felt they offered equal and impartial treatment for all vulnerable youth, whether they were IDPs or local children.

Speaking to some of the children, confirmed for the Team that the Houses had indeed been able to offer much needed enrichment of the students' lives. The results of creative projects can be seen on all the walls of both the Houses, photographs, paintings, and in the classes there were lively exchanges going on and laughter in the hallways.

Integrating Program Components for Youth and the Community

When asked about integrating program components for a greater impact on youth and involving the community in youth projects and advocacy, the staff responded that they were already involved in doing just that. For example, they told us they had contacted the Young Lawyers Association to help in a number of projects and in advocacy training. Most of all they said, they were continuing to respond to local needs and possibilities, which came up in the course of helping whole families in a mentoring role.

TYH staff told the Team that in the beginning of the program, IDPs were still unsettled and thinking that they might still be able to return home, but later in the program when they began to settle into the new environment, involvement with the parents increased. It was when both parents and children accepted themselves as part of the community, that the work with the children became more fruitful. The integration process, while difficult and never complete, helped create a more positive environment for everyone, and permitted staff to reach out to the community more easily.

ZYH has been particularly successful in its efforts to integrate the young participants in their programs. Zugdidi is a city of high unemployment in both the local population and among IDPs, so there is no limit to the need for their service. They have been able to use a local radio station to broadcast English lessons and health information to more of the local population than can be reached in their facility. They partnered with IREX to set up a free Internet service for all, and have started a small café, aerobics and ballroom dancing classes as fundraising activities, but these also make the community feel more a part of the House as “their” local institution. They told the Team that they had involved the community from the beginning: the banks, the TV station, and the cell phone company. Many of their volunteers come from the local companies and other NGOs in the vicinity provide a constant source of mutual help and experience.

The Negative or Unexpected Results of the Program

One of the negative or unexpected results of the program was common to both Houses; the length of some of the courses. While computer basics can be gained in a short period of time, competency in a language needs more class time. The staff felt that all language courses needed to be of longer duration in order to achieve progress from one level to the next. This resulted in difficulty classifying new students as beginners, intermediates, or advanced, which made enrollment at the beginning of a new cycle somewhat complicated.

ZYH said the outpouring of help they received after the fire surprised them. Help came from the rich, but especially from the very poor. This showed them they were on the right path they said. Another problem was the “need for numbers” as they called it. They tried to satisfy UMCOR’s request that they serve great numbers of children, sometimes, they thought, at the expense of quality experience, as in the language courses.

The UMCOR staff in both Houses that had been part of the project from early times said another problem was that they did not have courses or training in civic education, conflict management, peace education and human rights. This problem was solved as cooperation with the AED Youth Clubs grew. In both Tbilisi and in Zugdidi, the programs are not only working together, but are housed under the same roof and consider themselves as an organizational unit continuing to do

what they consider necessary and important work. The one other thing missing in both houses at the beginning were sports, and that is still a lack that needs addressing. Space and place for such activities has been available only in the summer camps. They wish it were something they could offer year round.

Effectiveness of the Houses in Reaching Young People

The staff feels that they have been very effective, and have improved their selection criteria and out reach over time. There is always a demand for a place in the courses in both houses, and the staff only wish they had the capacity to accept more children. They have had to become more selective, and now, in the application forms, try to find out whether or not the child has leadership qualities that can be promoted. It is through these young leaders, the staff said, that more clubs and programs can be offered by children who have learned to do for themselves and are then able to do for others.

2. Conclusions

The Team found that in design, implementation and achievements, UMCOR, through the Houses in Zugdidi and in Tbilisi, had indeed fulfilled their mission to foster community development and dialogue in the aftermath of the conflict in Abkhazia through the psychological, social and educational development of youth affected on both sides of the conflict; and to provide vulnerable youth with sustainable opportunities for personal growth and psychosocial rehabilitation.

3. Recommendations

In this part of the UMCOR program that serves vulnerable youth, one could only wish that there had been more resources to meet the demand. The staff and the Evaluation Team agree on this matter completely. The Team of one US citizen and three Georgians enjoyed the atmosphere in both Houses, which was in stark contrast to the environment outside both places. Inside there is talk and laughter, and busy children, as well as adult groups. Even when the power failed, the discussion and the work went on. If anything, our recommendation would be that the model be continued and expanded to include more of the youth in Georgia that is so in need of educational opportunities outside of school, and possibilities for creative self-expression.

Where it is not possible to expand programs that include so many different activities, (as many as 14 or 15 in some Youth Houses) the subjects offered should be tailored to local needs at the start, and care should be taken to allow time for some mastery of a subject such as language. In other words, deepening some of the activities is to be recommended. Along with this comes the recommendation to donors, that while their governments may only be interested in the “how many” question, qualitative issues should not be left out in the race to show success in terms of numbers.

D. CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

1. Findings

The Empowerment and Capacity Development of Youth

When asked if the program empowered youth and developed their capacity, and whether or not the activities were designed to fit the target communities, the answer at both Houses was a resounding yes. The answer was the same when they were asked if the communities had become actively involved in the design of the program.

The Team observed that the Youth Houses were practically the only youth activities available to their communities, so anything they offered was a plus. Symptomatic of their success in empowerment and in capacity development for the youth they served, is that most of their present instructors are former “graduates” of their programs. In some cases they act as volunteers or mentors, in others they are paid staff. The success stories are many and well detailed in UMCOR’s final report. The few young people the Team met and talked with at random in the hallways of both Houses, were articulate and anxious to show us whatever they were doing. That alone seems a good indicator of success.

In TYH, the parents who live around the House are often called on to volunteer, and, we were told, “They always respond.” Their programs are often shown on Abkhaz TV because of parental help. This present level of involvement came, however, over time, especially after UMCOR purchased their present site and the neighborhood knew the House was there to stay. They also pointed out that when a street cleaning day was called for the area, at least 250 families showed up for a fundraiser on that same day at the House. The parents left their children to play and eat, while the parents went out to clean.

As pointed out above, the ZYH involved the community from the beginning and continues to build on that strength.

The Effectiveness and Relevance of the Training Programs, the Skills Gained and the Career Counseling Offered to the Program Participants and their Linkage to Existing Employer Opportunities

The answers here vary by Youth House, but are also part of a larger problem of market dis/organization and dis/information that presently exists in the Georgian labor market. The staff of TYH said they had no links to the market, because it is so disorganized, but that they try to help on an individual basis. They use aptitude tests for students who cannot decide what to do and counsel them the best they can. The labor market is still so new, that most of the older staff has no experience on which to base advice, but most are at least aware of what they do not know.

ZYH is in a slightly different position as early on, they began having career nights where they would bring in people of different professions and have them speak about what they do and how they prepared for their jobs. The House also uses aptitude and other testing tools to help students find their way.

Certainly both Houses offer languages and computer courses, which help prepare students for the new job market. However, the main obstacles to preparing students for that new market lie well outside the control of either Youth House. These obstacles are an almost mystical belief among Georgian youth that knowing a foreign language and the computer are a sure ticket to a job and that an education abroad will get you a really good job. The youth also believe that you are still not likely to get that job unless you have “friends in high places,” and are willing to pay to get that position. (See the Georgian Youth Assessment.)

The Possibility that the Youth Houses will be Able to Offer Fee-for-Service Training for Other Organizations and Other Youth

Not only is it a possibility, they are already doing so. In the TYH, their house trainers have been doing teacher training for some time, and the EC asked them to do Human Rights courses. Many graduates are working as trainers for other organizations we were told, and graduates are doing volunteer training to build the capacity of other students.

In the ZYH, fees from computer and English classes support the same activities for youth who cannot pay. The café and adult classes pay for other parts of the House program, and we were told their trainers are busy all the time.

Both Houses provide a good bridge for students between their school lives and their environment at home, offering recreational and educational opportunities, which are few and far between anywhere for young people in Georgia. The Youth Assessment found that financial difficulties keep many children and youth from taking advantage of such normal activities as movies, discos and concerts, though these are offered only in the larger cities. It is no wonder that the House and Club activities are so sought after.

2. Conclusion

The Youth Houses are both invaluable resources for the youth whom they serve, and the community support they have engendered represents their value to that community. It is not yet possible however, for the Youth Houses to provide a bridge to a job market that is so little formed as an actual “market” functioning according to what is understood as supply and demand for developed nations. In Georgia the job market, as well as the educational environment, and the health system, etc., is still based on patronage and “rent-seeking.” Young people have the idea that computer and English will help them get a job, while only a foreign degree will put them at the “top of the heap.” Making the situation still more complex is widely held belief by Georgian youth that vocational or technical school is a “school for failures.” Thus, the Youth Houses fill an important gap in the educational, recreational and creative needs of Georgian and Abkhaz youth, but even the Youth Houses are not up to solving some of Georgia’s endemic problems such as a deteriorating educational system and corruption, and a job market that is still not a “real market.”

3. Recommendations

There are already efforts underway to curb corruption and to reform the educational system. As the Team found in its Youth Assessment, young people are hopeful that merit and excellence in their studies will eventually be the criteria for employment. Until that time, it is important that

the Youth Houses openly discuss these problems with their students, and counsel them as best they can.

It is also recommended that staff of the Youth Houses be supplied with real job descriptions and that one of the caveats they impart to students is that computer and English alone are not the ‘magic wand’ they are hoping for. Much needs to be done to reduce the stigma of vocational training and the Youth Houses are a good place to start.

Other programs need to generate jobs, in agriculture, in service and communications, and the Youth Houses need to be brought into the loop about such efforts. It is recommended that a Youth Employment Service be set up for local job markets that can feed into a larger system. The Youth Houses would make good partners for such a program.

E. SUSTAINABILITY

1. Findings

Possibilities for Future Organizational and Financial Sustainability

Rarely have so few organizations taken part in so much NGO training as the Youth Houses. It began at the start of the program, and its continuation was one of the reasons for so many extensions, both funded and non-funded. To answer the question of whether or not they can become sustainable in the near future, we need to look at organizational and financial sustainability separately.

Both ZYH and TYH appear to be organizationally sustainable at present as both Houses have what appear to be solid administrations and the ability to mobilize volunteers. TYH said that as they had now managed for nine months without funding, they were no longer afraid and they felt confident they could go on. However, for financial sustainability, they know they have to put a lot more effort into fundraising, but they will do their best to continue, what they call “the daily fight.”

ZYH is in a better situation. They already have a number of grants and partner organizations, and they continue to work with their community, and are able to generate some income through the House itself. ZYH appears to be on their way to both organizational and financial sustainability. However, they still need donor support given the economic environment, even if it is no longer through UMCOR.

2. Conclusion

While a great deal of credit should go to UMCOR for putting so much effort into training these organizations, and supporting their transition to independent NGOs, it should also be noted that the ZYH was founded on the base of an already existing NGO, which was ready for the next stage of organizational growth. NGOs have life cycles like any other organization, and to some degree, Atinati and UMCOR appear to have found each other at the right time. It is to be hoped the others will survive, but that remains to be seen.

3. *Recommendations*

Both Youth Houses, and most likely the others in Abkhazia as well, will need continued mentoring and some support over the next few years. They give an important service to their communities, but the local governments are nowhere near being able to support these NGOs financially, and the community they serve is largely unemployed and poor. The Houses should remain partners for other USAID programs while they continue to search for other funds and donors.

F. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

1. *Findings*

Potential for Working Together in Abkhazia and Georgia

With the same objectives and goals for the Youth Houses in both Abkhazai and Georgia, and to some degree with the same programs, has their potential for work together been realized? The answer to this question for them all is that, of course, they have not. The political tensions and restrictions have not allowed them to do nearly as much together as they had wanted to do.

To further this goal the TYH told us they needed more events, workshops, and camps to bring the two sides together more often. They have good relations, but these relations need “intensive care.”

In Zugdidi the Team was told much the same thing; more meetings on neutral territory and joint activities. They have ideas such as using the Internet to help find family and neighbors who are still missing, but they want more joint training so they can continue to grow together in experience.

2. *Conclusion*

UMCOR’s third program goal was “to finalize the ‘professionalization’ and self-sustainability of four local NGOs managing UMCOR Youth Houses, as well as cooperation between them, and to complete development of NGO structures of Youth Houses and stimulate grassroots citizen involvement.” It is clear that the Youth Houses are working on their own to continue their mission, and their future is being influenced and strengthened by the presence in both the ZYH and the TYH, of the AED Youth Clubs. The synergy is good in both. The work with IDPs and local youth continues for both the House staff and for the AED Club group, which has helped integrate the two slightly different missions into one: to serve the community’s vulnerable young people, whether they are Georgian or IDPs.

It is also clear that both the Clubs and the Houses together have been able to get the attention of other organizations that have come to them with projects to implement. Hopefully, this capacity can be turned into financial sustainability in the long run.

3. Recommendations

The success of the melding of Youth Clubs and Youth Houses is perhaps accidental, but the two NGOs we saw were stronger because they were working together. The Youth House gained the experience and the training of staff that had worked almost exclusively with IDPs, while the Youth Club had a place to work. It is suggested that this formula may be one to learn from as we look at the development of the AED Youth Clubs, many of which are struggling to survive without a base of operations.

IV. AED YOUNG LEADERS FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT (YLPD)

A. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND INTERVENTIONS

The project goals was:

“To consolidate the YLPD Program into a sustainable cross-conflict collaborative organizational network of youth clubs and NGOs for promising Abkhaz and Georgian young leaders engaged in community service, career oriented education programs and employment and income generation activities in order to build a constituency for the peaceful resolution of the conflict and a foundation for long-term economic development.”

B. PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

AED has conducted the YLPD Program since early 1998 as part of the Global Training for Development Project. It grew out of a summer camp for Abkhaz and Georgian war victims, with the hope that it would demonstrate the ability of Abkhaz and Georgia leaders to work together toward a common and peaceful goal.

From 1998 to 2001, the program grew in numbers, scope and depth of activity to the point that in 2001, the program had reached 510 young people between the ages of 14 and 18. The project had also amassed a group of 75 trainers and assistant trainers who had reached many other children, mostly from vulnerable and IDP communities.

The Clubs in Georgia were in Kutaisi, Zugdidi, Batumi and two in Tbilisi. On the Abkhaz side the Clubs were located in Gagra, Gudauta, Gulripsh, Ochamchira, Tkvarchel, Gali, and three in Sukhumi. Each was involved in educational programs such as English and computer courses, community and small business activities, and in training programs on conflict transformation. Most Club members also worked as volunteers in after-school and weekend activities for younger children.

Probably the best indicator of the success of this program to train young leaders is that most all of the program graduates went on to higher educational institutions, and 79% of these gave the program credit for having renewed their confidence and given them better defined career goals. At least 80% of these still worked as volunteers, trainers or assistant trainers when AED surveyed the graduates. It is also remarkable that regardless of the tensions between Abkhazia and Georgia, even during renewed violence, the young people on both sides maintained their

own lines of communication as best they could, and the authorities on both sides wanted the program to continue in 2001.

It was in that atmosphere of hope that AED proposed a two-year program to consolidate the program's accomplishments into "a sustainable and independent collaborative network of YLPD Clubs/NGOs on both sides of the conflict. From 2002 until 2004 they intended to:

- ▶ Consolidate the leadership, conflict transformation and career development components of the program;
- ▶ Reinforce and strengthen the professional and instructional skills of the YLPD trainers and assistant trainers;
- ▶ Strengthen the educational, training, organizational and managerial capacities of the YLPD clubs/NGOs;
- ▶ Promote the active involvement and participation of alumni, teachers, parents and community leaders in the program;
- ▶ Strengthen the community service, employment and income-generating activities of the YLPD clubs; and
- ▶ Increase and diversify the sources of funding for the YLPD program; and Establish linkages and networking between the YLPD Program and other similar programs in the world, particularly in the Caucasus Region and the Balkans.

In other words, AED intended to create a financially, technically, institutionally, and organizationally sustainable network of NGOs working on youth and conflict issues.

C. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

1. Findings

Critical Interventions

Tbilisi AED staff told us that the most critical interventions for them in achieving program objectives have been their close involvement with all their participants, the work in civic education and an atmosphere in which all could openly express their feelings and opinions.

The APD Club in Tbilisi said that the program had changed their lives and the lives of many by all the program activities.

The Kutaisi YLPD works in their home city and also in Tskaltubo. The latter was once a fashionable resort, but is now home to a large population of IDPs and some local residents. There is practically no employment of any kind in Tskaltobo anymore, and while there are still green parks and open spaces, most of the hotels and buildings have been taken over to house the IDPs. It is a grim environment in what was once a beautiful place. In the town of Kutaisi, the Club does projects for their communities to practice their leadership skills. While in Tskaltubo

they work with IDP children and try to create a “multiplier effect” by training these young groups to help each other.

Batumi’s Youth Club sees its most useful activities as those that have created activities for free time and they work together with the local branch of the YMCA and with the Trade Union.

In Zugdidi, the Club ‘Droni’ and the other YLPD Clubs work with and in the Youth House. “IDPs have special needs and complexes,” they told the Team, “and need help regaining self-confidence. Our best work has been to help the IDP children so they can join the other programs as equals and then continue to support them while they are learning other things.”

Integrating Programs and Community Capacity

Part of the work one Tbilisi Youth Club has done together with the Youth House has been to work in the community to become a recognized local organization. As an example of their success, they mentioned the OSCE SOS program where everyone took care of the neighborhood’s children while the community did a clean-up job in the area. They have also involved the Young Lawyers Association in a human rights and civic education program. At the time of the Evaluation, the activities for the House and the Club that work together in Tbilisi appear to have become inseparable.

The Kutaisi Club tries to integrate summer and winter camps because, they said, “You cannot change opinions unless the leaders of clubs and NGOs discuss ideas, share and teach each other fundraising. There are so many needs in our community to be addressed, and we cannot do it by ourselves. We have no Youth House to help us.”

The Batumi group, ‘Favorite’, would like to be able to do more in education. They see “lots of talent,” but to help them, we need to get Soros involved for a debate program, for instance, and someone else for more art activities. Unfortunately, most programs tend to be short and then stop. They feel deeply that they need longer-term activities that will give youth some consistency in their lives.

Surprising or Negative Program Impact

For the Tbilisi Youth Club, the most negative impact for them came when they had no place to meet, which was resolved by getting together with the TYH. “Our work is complementary not competing. We never heard of any sustainability requirement for AED, and other AED coordinators also suffer from having no premises of their own. In the case of some like Batumi their mission can be diverted by obligation if not dependence and children forced to do the Trade Union’s job. It can be good to work together, but the result is not always positive. In our case it is, and in Zugdidi.”

The Kutaisi/Tskaltobo Club felt that working with only 18 young people in Kutaisi and 14 in Tskaltubo, when there are so many who need help was a definite negative. “The budget is also for one club but we have expenses for two. There is only one salary for two teachers, and we have no computer to train on. There are 8,000 IDPs here and if you add the vulnerable local Georgians that is another 30%. We would love to be in a situation like Atenati and Droni that have a place and equipment.”

Batumi's 'Favorite' Club told the Team that they offer programs in the hotel where IDPs live, which is not very satisfactory. "It would be better if we could be elsewhere. We have wanted to do more but could not so without financing. We can just barely continue what we are doing with volunteers."

Zugdidi's Youth Club said that," While 'Atenati' was trying to do UMCOR's numbers, we were trying to help kids who were raw from Abkhazia, who had only Russian, to be ready for school, and to be able to join Georgia kids in their activities here."

Tbilisi's APD told us they would have had no place to go if Father Georgi had not offered them space where he works with street children. (The young people the Team met from the Club are homeless themselves, but they did not tell us so.)

The effectiveness of the Clubs in Reaching Young People and the Appropriateness of the Selection Criteria

The section above answers this question in one way. The Clubs were effective, but they feel they did not reach enough of the youth who were in need of help. The criteria for selection were given by AED to each Club. The participants needed to be: economically vulnerable; have good academic records; have been involved in cultural, athletic, musical or artistic activities; show leadership potential; have good interpersonal skills; be committed to peaceful resolution of conflicts; and have been active as volunteers for the last six months in YLPD programs. They also needed to be between the ages of 14 and 18 at the time they were admitted to the Club, and to have lost a close relative in the conflict. This is a set of criteria that led to self-selection of the Club members where they could work toward membership once they knew the rules. None of the members or the younger groups we met questioned the validity of the criteria.

2. Conclusions

There is no question that each of the Clubs have selected and worked with natural leaders. Where these young people have found resources they have used them to the fullest. They are enthusiastic, articulate, hard working and smart. However, the members we talked to in Kutaisi seemed overwhelmed with the enormity of their task, though still willing to do what they could. The ADP in Tbilisi was a bit shy about using space that was not really their own; very careful of the resources that belonged to another group. The Clubs that were working together with the Youth Houses were the most confident of succeeding and, while still feeling the need to do more, pleased with what they had been able to achieve.

3. Recommendations

Knowing that budgets for such projects cannot be expanded indefinitely, the Team suggests that while the program was well designed and implemented, and achieved a great deal, the Clubs needed more help to mobilize their communities earlier in the program. Working with IDPs, if integration is the goal, appears to have worked better where the IDPs were learning in the same classrooms with vulnerable Georgia children as in Zugdidi and in the Youth House in Tbilisi. More institutional support would also have permitted the young Club leaders to feel they had accomplished more, and that their accomplishment was more lasting.

D. CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

1. Findings

The Empowerment and Capacity Development of Youth

In order to answer the question of whether or not the program enabled and empowered youth, and developed their capacity, the Team carried out an informal survey of several of the young groups with whom the Youth Clubs work.

We asked the Tskaltubo group of students what they liked about working with the Club. One told us she felt more self-confident than she had before, that her view of the world had changed, and that she felt less afraid of conflict. Another told us she thought the most effective program was the training in business, but she said she liked conflict negotiation best. “I don’t know what I want to do yet, but want to know English. Here I have English lessons, learn computer and find friends,” said one child. “English and computer will help me get a job, but we have no counseling on what sort of jobs we can get.” Others said they wanted to learn German and have exchange programs and better contacts with other countries. Yet another said she wanted economic projects, but, she specified, “You have to have loans available too.” She then explained to us, what makes a good project and what does not.

We asked the leaders about community involvement, and one young man told us that most of the IDP families were waiting to go somewhere else and had little stake in the community. “Look around you,” he said, “If you could go somewhere else, why wouldn’t you?”

In Batumi 14 children from a youth group all said they really liked the camps they had with the YMCA. One said that she enjoyed conflict work; another favored small business training. Several others said they had joined to learn English, and ‘conflictology’ (this is a new word I think, but it fits.) Summer camp with concerts and games, and making new friends was a popular answer. One little boy smiled and said he “liked everything.” One slightly older child said she was proud that she had now become an assistant trainer. “I prefer being active to watching TV,” she announced.

In Tbilisi the Youth House together with the Club mentioned the various activities they had carried out together that involved the community, such as OSCE’s SOS day, and many other times when the community played a part as volunteers. In Zugdidi, Atenati enlisted community support, even before it became a Youth House, and Youth Club ‘Droni’ and the others have continued to benefit from that involvement.

The Program’s Effectiveness for and Relevance to Future Employment

In Tbilisi we were told there were no links, and that there was a real need for an Information Center and much more work to be done to understand possibilities for employment. Kutaisi members said their Club could lead to jobs in other organizations, or in the Club itself as a trainer. When asked about career counseling, the answer was, “What career counseling?”

One Batumi Club member told us that after conflict training he went to the university to study the subject and make it his career. Others went to study Russian literature, International

Relations, and two were studying law; one with a specialty in human rights, and the other in children's rights.

In Zugdidi, 'Droni' members told the Team that it does job counseling on an individual basis, but also said that it mean little here for IDPs. "For that matter there are few jobs here for anyone, but the House has career nights that are interesting."

The Possibility of Fee-for-Service Training

Fee-for-Service Training is only beginning to be an idea for Tbilisi where the Club did one session for the EC in Human Rights, and, we were told, the Junior Achievement Program pays one teacher for the Center. The Kutaisi group has done training for others, but has never been paid for doing so. They think the idea needs more time and legitimacy, because "right now there are too many free trainers out there."

Tbilisi's AED members explained their present situations. One who had studied English and computer went to the university to study English Literature, and went to US in 2000. She now works as a trainer in Tbilisi with Georgian and Abkhazian groups. For the moment she is still studying, but except for the training, is unemployed. Two of the group used to work in the AED office, eventually worked for several NGOs, but were now unemployed. Another member had taken business training and been picked as a finance person for AED. All still do volunteer work.

In Zugdidi, the Club has one teacher who works voluntarily with the IDPs in language, "but we do not get paid. The Youth House sustains us now."

Youth Clubs as a Bridge to Further Education

In Tbilisi the answer was yes, we are. In Kutaisi we were told that only a few of the children involved can go on to higher education. "Most of them, us included, cannot afford to go the next step. Access to education is a financial problem that we cannot solve."

2. Conclusion

Skill strengthening for the children and for the young leaders has very mixed results. Where the House and Club are working together does not, in this case, make much difference. Batumi appears to have had the most success, at least in supporting their members to pursue a higher education. Unfortunately, each Club is somewhat a victim of its local employment environment and the larger problems in Georgia itself. The Clubs were not in a position to create employment, except through AED itself. While it fills an important gap in their lives for the children involved, the program cannot hope to provide either the financial support needed for these children to have access to the educational system, nor can it solve Georgia's critical unemployment problem.

3. Recommendations

The program is of great value to the IDPs it serves, but should have lowered its expectation to be more in keeping with what is possible within Georgian reality. If new training is to be offered in

the future, work in advocacy would help the Clubs articulate the problems they face in access to education, and in their employment future. These young activists are good candidates to mobilize behind the need for educational reforms and anti-corruption campaigns, which would also help further integrate them into Georgian life as it is.

E. SUSTAINABILITY

1. Findings

At APD in Tbilisi we were told that for now, volunteers provide the continuation of the program “until we find funding.” Kutaisi members said that maybe in the next stage they could work toward sustainability, “but for now we need help to do that.” A member of ‘Favorite’ in Batumi said, “The State needs to support NGOs to help solve the problem of free time for children.”

The Clubs that work together with ‘Atenati’ in Zugdidi and the Club supported by the Tbilisi Youth House Foundation, are not sustainable on their own, but by providing complementary services, are managing to survive, as is Batumi through the graces of the Trade Union and the YMCA.

2. Conclusion

The Clubs have the will to be sustainable, but at the moment, not the capacity to carry out their wishes, except in the case where they are working jointly with other organizations.

3. Recommendations

The beginning of a Youth Club organization is still in its early stages, but needs to be given more assistance and training in NGO management of all kinds. There is an excellent core of trainers that could be given TOT in all the needed subjects. Other NGOs can also supply material that has already been prepared in Russian and in Georgian. While most of the members continue to work with the IDP children, individuals in each Club could be selected to receive intensive NGO training and be put in charge of fundraising, writing proposals and contacting possible partners. They will need assistance in contacting foreign donors who will be better able to support their needs than the Georgian government, either Central or municipal. The members that continue to work with IDPs also need encouragement and further support to be able to broaden their membership base, and thus also the numbers they can serve. Their fine volunteer spirit only needs a little more encouragement and support for them to reach out to more children.

F. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

1. Findings

With the Same Goals in Georgia and in Abkhazia for the Youth Clubs, has the Potential for their Work been Realized?

All the clubs we interviewed said, no, of course not.

Tbilisi claims that more workshops and camps are necessary to increase the opportunities to bring the two sides together. In Kutaisi, the members told us that in summer camps “we were just getting to know each other, but no implementation is really possible beyond youth NGOs, and a few joint projects when the politics are the way they are.”

In Kutaisi we also heard that “we need more exchange programs, because you have to go elsewhere to really educate yourself. A Georgian diploma in the US or Europe is nothing.” Another club member disagreed with her companion and said, “The education system actually is good, if you show potential to do for yourself you can get the skills you need to realize your potential. Language is most important.”

Batumi members write to their friends in Abkhazia often. Three of them went to see friends on their own but admitted it was risky. They plan to start a social research club, and to work on HIV/AIDS, tobacco and drug dependence, which they told us are all related issues. Another club member is setting up a women’s network for peace.

Zugdidi is working with their radio station on outreach, but want more meetings and joint activities. “We are able do more to involve more youth in activities and work on employment. We want to grow, but access to education in the regions is very bad. We need to better bridge the gap. We will keep up Internet connections and try to find friends and family who are missing.”

Tbilisi APD continues to have meetings between Georgian and Abkhazians and wishes it could do more about youth employment. For them the most important issue continues to be Conflict Transformation Training; the next most important subjects are Human rights, Trafficking, and HIV/AIDS. “We are trainers and we will continue to work in these areas as much as we can.”

2 Conclusion

The young people mentioned above have good ideas about what needs to be continued and what needs to change, though the Clubs are not able to do a great deal about the political constraints and they know it. They also see that there is a possibility for youth to get together on territory other than their own. However, they are also caught up in the same problems that confront all who live in Georgia; the education system and unemployment. In order to face these issues they need more contact with their Georgian peers.

3. Recommendations

More opportunities for joint projects need to be found where the youth can continue their dialogue. Given the direction of politics at present, the IDPs also need help to confront the realities they face in Georgia. There is little hope the Clubs will survive if the young people involved are not brought into career training and helped to have better access to education. They need a “place at the table” with their Georgian friends and neighbors. We recommend that more overlap be supported between local Georgian NGOs and the NGO Clubs for IDPs.

V. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT PAST PROGRAMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIVITIES

A. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The UMCOR and AED programs have served vulnerable youth well and one could only wish that there had been more resources to meet the demand. The Team enjoyed the atmosphere in both Houses and their time with the Clubs. We found busy children and teenagers, as well as adult groups. Even when the power failed, the discussion and the work went on. If anything, our major recommendation would be that the models be continued and expanded to include more of the youth in Georgia that is so in need of educational opportunities outside of school, and possibilities for creative self-expression.

Recommendations

1. While there were many different activities, as many as 14 or 15 in some Youth Houses, the subjects offered should be tailored more to local needs at the start, and care should be taken to allow time for some mastery of a subject such as learning a language. Some of the activities may need to be eliminated in order to deepen others.
2. Because the quantity of activities offered was partly the result of requests to implementers from program management, it is also recommended that while some donor governments may only be interested in the “how many” question, qualitative issues should not be left out in the race to show success in terms of numbers.
3. Knowing that budgets for such projects cannot be expanded indefinitely, the Team suggests that while the AED program was well designed and implemented, and achieved a great deal, the Clubs need more help to mobilize their communities early in the program.
4. Working with IDPs, if integration is the goal, appears to have worked better where the IDPs were learning in the same classrooms with vulnerable Georgia children; e.g. in Zugdidi and in the Youth House in Tbilisi. More institutional support would also have permitted the young Club leaders to feel they had accomplished more, and that their accomplishment was more lasting.
5. More opportunities for joint projects are needed where the youth can continue their dialogues, between the youth groups in Georgia, and with those from other countries as well. Given the direction of politics at present, the IDPs also need help to confront the realities they face in Georgia. There is little hope the Clubs will survive if the young people involved are not brought into career training and helped to have better access to education. They need a “place at the table” with their Georgian friends and neighbors. We also recommend that more overlap be supported between local Georgian NGOs, including the Youth Houses, and the Clubs for IDPs.
6. There are a number of efforts to broaden access to the Internet by UNICEF and Soros. As USAID’s Youth Clubs are expanded, the implementer should place computers in the

new Centers where, not just the Club members, but other young people can also come and use the Internet.

7. It the suggestion of many of our focus group participants from the Youth Assessment, we agree that the Youth Clubs need to go into the schools and cafes to broaden their outreach, and not rely on word of mouth, or on flyers and brochures to let young people know of their activities and resources.

The success of the melding of Youth Clubs and Youth Houses is perhaps accidental, but we found the two NGOs we saw were stronger because they were working together. The Youth House gained the experience and the training of staff that had worked almost exclusively with IDPs, while the Youth Club had a place to work.

8. It is suggested that this formula, expanded on in the text of the Evaluation, may be one to learn from as the development of the AED Youth Clubs continues. Many are struggling presently to survive without a base of operations, meeting in apartments or wherever they can find temporary space. While a merger between Youth Houses and Clubs is not the only way to achieve success, some attention should be paid to creating institutional structure for the Clubs. A permanent meeting space or office with some equipment need not be very costly. Larger NGOs, schools or municipal donations of space need not create dependence, and there are many ways of acquiring second hand equipment.

B. CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

While other programs need to generate jobs in agriculture, in service and communications, the Youth Houses and Clubs need to be brought into the loop about such efforts. It is recommended that a Youth Employment Service be set up for local job markets that can feed into a larger system. The Youth Houses would make good partners for such a program.

There is currently, some random job counseling that takes place through Youth Houses and Clubs, but neither parents, nor most of the teachers in the school system, have previous knowledge of the job market that is helpful to young graduates. Most of the youth we talked to thought the only way to get a job was to “know someone” or have a mentor, or to pay for the position.

Recommendations

1. Helping to set up realistic job counseling through the Youth Clubs, and eventually developing a Youth Employment Agency would be a way to focus on the real job market. A core group of Youth Club “graduates” could be brought together for training, which would include such topics as writing basic job descriptions and resumes, and how to canvass local employers for job openings. Teaching the group how to match employers and skill inventories on a database, as well as interviewing both employers and future employees, would be the basis for a local network. Such an effort would require considerable communication between implementers of the new youth activity and partners working in USAID’s SO 1.3 projects.

2. There are already efforts underway to curb corruption and to reform the educational system in Georgia. As the Team found in its Youth Assessment, young people are hopeful that merit and excellence in their studies will eventually be the criteria for employment. Until that time, it is important that the Youth Houses and Clubs openly discuss these problems with their students, and counsel them as best they can as part of the work in job creation.
3. If new training by the Houses and Clubs is to be offered in the future, work in advocacy would help the students articulate the problems they face in access to education, and in their employment future. These young activists are good candidates to mobilize behind the need for educational reforms and anti-corruption campaigns, which would also help further integrate young people, especially the IDPs, into Georgian life as it is.
4. Apart from the Youth Employment Agency, staff of the Youth Houses and Clubs should be supplied with realistic job descriptions and one of the caveats they should impart to students is that computer and English alone are not the ‘magic wand’ they are hoping for, while suggesting ways to further the advantages of their computer and language studies.
5. Much also needs to be done to reduce the stigma against vocational training and the Youth Houses and Clubs are a good place to start. Because it appears to be essential for job creation at this point in Georgia’s transition, the Youth Assessment Team suggested a plan for, not only reviving the system of vocational education in Georgia, but also to remove some of the stigma with which it is currently burdened. The Team recommends that the Mission, perhaps in conjunction with the World Bank, which is working with the problem on a policy level, draft a study to detail the present state of vocational education and its facilities, and evaluate with recommendations on updating the curriculum. The study should also suggest ways to change the image of the sector as a choice for young people as an alternative to a university education.

C. SUSTAINABILITY

Both Youth Houses, and most likely the others in Abkhazia as well, will need continued mentoring and some support over the next few years. While they give an important service to their communities, the local governments are nowhere near being able to support these NGOs financially, and the community they serve is largely unemployed and poor.

Recommendations

1. The Houses should remain partners with other USAID programs while they continue to search for other funds and donors. While volunteerism has reached a good point, fee-for-service and even in-kind contributions should not be relied on yet, except in places such as Zugdidi, where they are old hands at getting support.
2. Sustainability is still in the future for the Clubs, and the beginning of a Youth Club organization is still in its early stages, and needs to be given more assistance and training in NGO management of all kinds.

3. We found there is an excellent core of trainers that should be given training of trainer skills in all the needed subjects. Training in NGO management, the recruitment of volunteers, developing a broader based membership, and fundraising, are all important knowledge and skills that would permit these organizations to better manage themselves to become more organizationally and financially sustainable. While it is understood that this training is taking place presently, those involved need to expand their efforts by creating a core of full-time trainers that can move around the country in the regional cities to conduct training.
4. Other NGOs can also supply material that has already been prepared in Russian and in Georgian languages. While most of the Club members continue to work with the IDPs and other vulnerable children, individuals in each Club could be selected to receive intensive NGO training and be put in charge of fundraising, writing proposals and contacting possible partners. They will need assistance in contacting foreign donors who will be better able to support their needs than the Georgian government, either Central or municipal. (Footnote: See Counterpart International's independent and sustainable training organization, Counterpart Creative Center, in Ukraine as a model.)
5. The members that continue to work with IDPs also need encouragement and further support to be able to broaden their membership base, and thus also the numbers they can serve. Their fine volunteer spirit only needs a little more encouragement and support for them to reach out to more children.

D. LESSONS LEARNED

While both programs have done an excellent job with the young people they were able to mobilize and serve, UMCOR set itself more reasonable goals than AED. Knowing that they had a very short period of time (in organizational development terms) to make their Houses into viable organizations, should have suggested to AED that they not plan such far-reaching changes. Just beginning to bring together a large number of Clubs on a regular basis would have been a start. The Evaluation Team found no evidence that there was any push to develop the larger organization's capacity or to institutionalize any part of a larger structure; e.g. such as some plan for regular networking.

On the other hand, we found that where there was already an NGO in existence, one that had grown organically out of local need and involvement such as 'Atenati' in Zugdidi, the organization continued to grow, and could not only include, but also support the Club. In Tbilisi, the Youth House Foundation drew the AED Club into its circle of programs, and both became stronger working on complimentary programs

The primary lesson learned then, is that it takes a good deal of time, a minimum of five years usually, to grow a sustainable NGO. Donors who create NGOs to serve a purpose usually end up with a dependent organization. While this is a legitimate way to respond to immediate needs in the event of a crisis, there is no reason to require that the artificially created NGO be sustainable. Sustainability can only be brought about in an institution responding to grassroots needs, and that in itself is a difficult developmental task requiring patience, a great deal of training and a long-term commitment.

E. IMPROVEMENTS AND SYNERGIES FOR THE NEW YOUTH PROGRAM

Recommendations

1. The Evaluation Team approves of the Mission's idea to, not just set up new Youth Clubs in other regions, but also to engage ethnic Georgian youth and to establish connections between them and their peers who are Ossetian, Armenian and Azeri, and Adjarian.
2. While a merger of the Youth Houses and Clubs may not be the only way to accomplish more and stronger organizations, a great deal of investment has already taken place in both, so it would seem an economical strategy to merge both where it is possible, and where they are willing to work together.
3. We also suggest that a permanent "house" in Kutaisi is much needed, with the understanding that this will support Youth Clubs both there and in Tskaltubo. In other cases where a "house" is not feasible, simply supporting some meeting place or office, and basic equipment may be enough for the new Clubs.
4. The Team also agrees that all children need to be exposed to civic education programs. While some may get the information through the targeted school program, others who are not in a financial position to continue school should also have the opportunity to join in these classes outside school hours. However it is done, through the Clubs, or the Youth Houses, it is an important course for all.
5. The programs supporting student government and civic education in schools have created a core of activist students on whom many of the NGO leaders depend to implement the organizations' activities. These students are either working for or managing NGOs that are reaching out to the most needy in their communities. There are not nearly enough of these young people to meet the overwhelming need. Continued training at this juncture is essential to expand the outreach of all ongoing programs. Below we suggest a few areas where these young people can help in furthering other USAID programs.
6. Soros and other donors are putting together films on diversity for young children. The Youth Houses and Clubs have media groups that should be enlisted to contribute other films on subjects such as "living together," films of joint activities, and local cultural studies targeted to older students.
7. While Internews has a special program for youth called Kids' Crossroads, we would suggest that the program in Albania that created a TV show called "Heroes of Albania," could be another possible model for involving youth in productions about their communities, perhaps working with some of the small infrastructure projects to show what is being done around the country. The program was extremely successful in giving Albanians pride in their own efforts, showing that a community can achieve much by working together, and it gave a feeling of usefulness and societal inclusion. The Youth Houses have journalism and film clubs that could work on the project locally.
8. Some conclusions of the Youth Assessment suggest that more athletics and recreational activities of all kinds are much needed for all children who live in Georgia. Pamphlets

and booklets on HIV/AIDS and trafficking are fairly useless as this generation reads very little. TV has been the most effective carrier of the news. Rural areas need special attention because there is so little electricity that the message is often missed, and trainers are needed there to talk to women's groups and in classrooms

9. Youth Clubs members can be trained to write proposals to charities and donor organizations for their summer activities. Almost all youth mentioned that a summer camp experience had solidified training and friendships with many different social groups and nationalities. Because it was mentioned by youth and adults alike, we suggest that another area where tolerance and conflict resolution can be learned, is in the summer camps that have been held for children by a number of donors. Both the youth and the adults that work with them, have mentioned the importance of these. Charitable groups from the US and Europe should be encouraged to fund these and support them with volunteers when possible as UMCOR and the YMCA have done in the past.
10. In the process of interviewing groups of trainers and "graduates" of the AED Youth Clubs, we asked them what they thought the most important issues were in their lives. All of them said that conflict mediation was at the top of their list, and some of them wanted to make this a career. Other areas of interest to them were trafficking, human rights and HIV/AIDS. They also see drugs and alcohol as problems that are symptomatic of unemployment, the lack of extra-curricular activity for youth, and the lack of access to education. Hiring these "graduates" as trainers for crosscutting programs could exponentially spread information to more people.

F. A FEW FINAL CAVEATS FOR THE NEW YOUTH PROGRAM

The Team agrees that "conflictology," business development, vocational training, and other extra-curricular activities are all important subjects. We have stated our recommendation about NGO training above. However, we expect that hiring teachers from formal schools will be a difficult task unless they can be paid. Ideally, the teachers hired would have undergone retraining in participatory teaching methods as opposed to lecture style. Many of them also have other jobs already, and the older ones need to retire, but are afraid to do so for fear they may have to live on their pensions. We suggest using "graduates" of the previous youth programs, instead of teachers, may be an alternative worth considering for the new activity.

Trying to institute vocational training may also be an uphill battle, as the stigma against vocational and technical education is strong among Georgian youth, and most of them feel that vocational schools are only for "those who have failed regular school." Vocational education certainly needs support, but future implementers should be aware that it would be a difficult campaign. Our recommended study seems timely.

Most of the NGOs that the Team interviewed were following traditional missions; e.g. creating events, competitions and charitable activities. The challenge of creating free-time programs and helping the poor is being met to the best of their abilities, but with limited resources — mostly volunteers and a few donor grants. They are all overwhelmed by the enormity of the needs and by their limited capacity to deal with them. It is discouraging, most of them admit, but they say they also try to remind themselves that at least they are doing something.

We agree with the Mission that youth club coordinators and representative members should be more involved in planning sessions for joint activities than in past programs. This is also an opportunity to involve other NGOs that are working with youth, from student unions, to women's organizations whose members might also benefit from and contribute to local programs.

It should be noted that 'Atenati' in Zugdidi is already starting to work on a project to find friends and family members that were separated by conflict. They intend to use the Internet and have made good use of their radio station as well. Some of the successful groups like the Youth House there and in Tbilisi, need to be given credit for their success by having them share their experience at the yearly gatherings.

Finally, the Team would like to note that the indicators chosen for the new activity are all numerical — number of clubs, number of direct beneficiaries, etc. with the exception is the last one; change in attitudes, as measured by surveys of participants. We wish to caution the Mission that the numerical indicators will not give information on the program's actual impact. The indicators are only able to tell you "how many" and nothing about the quality of the intervention. The Mission may also wish to clarify with the implementer, exactly what attitudinal changes are to take place. The Team found no mention of these.

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ANNEX B

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